

Bill to limit chlorine-gas use clears committee

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WASHINGTON — The House Homeland Security Committee this week approved on an 18-11 party-line vote a proposed law that would allow the federal government to order facilities using high-risk chemicals to switch to “inherently safer technologies” (IST), according to a June 25 [press release](#) from the American Water Works Association (AWWA).

When applied to drinking water and wastewater treatment plants, the law (HR2868) would affect the use of gaseous chlorine. Water/wastewater utilities had been [exempt](#) from a federal security program set up to prevent terrorist acts or other incidents caused by the use of hazardous chemicals.

In addition to giving the government the ability to order the use of ISTs at water plants, the new law, the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Act, would also give the US Department of Homeland Security the power to stop a plant’s operations, although wastewater plants are specifically exempted from that provision, according to AWWA.

AWWA said the House committee did approve amendments allowing facilities to: appeal an IST order to an administrative law judge; require Homeland Security to report to Congress on the effects of ISTs before ordering a switch to them; and prevent Homeland Security from ordering such changes if they would “demonstrably reduce” the facility’s operations.

AWWA has urged Congress to leave chemical choices up to individual facilities.